

ROBB ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SHOOTING

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, another mass shooting, another elementary school; 19 children, ages 7 through 10, gunned down; two adults killed. They were in our schools—an elementary school, a place that parents send their children expecting it to be a safe zone where they can learn and interact with other children and be safe from things like being attacked and shot. An elementary school we are talking about, the anguish of the families who have lost their children or lost their loved ones.

Children who witnessed this will be traumatized for life, scarred by what happened in Texas.

And then last week, we saw in Buffalo 10 people gunned down while shopping in a grocery store, very much racially motivated by a White supremacist. This is happening throughout our country.

We have had gun violence in Baltimore. A few years ago, we had gun violence at Great Oaks School in Maryland. We are seeing this happen over and over and over again.

I and all Marylanders and Americans are sad. We are angry; we are fearful; and we are frustrated. Yes, we have to deal with the mental health issues here; there is no question about that in my mind. Let me just point out for my colleagues that I join with Senator WYDEN and Senator CRAPO and Senator THUNE in releasing the draft on the telehealth recommendations as part of the mental health work that is being done by the Senate Finance Committee. Our Presiding Officer has been one of the leaders on this issue. We recognize we have to do more for mental health.

Our draft discussion documents are dealing with telehealth. We really learned during COVID-19 how valuable telehealth is for access to care. Individuals who could not get to their healthcare providers were able to do that through telehealth services. We also recognize how valuable telehealth services are in regard to mental health and behavioral health. It was gaining access that could have been denied before. This is all-important that we move forward on these recommendations. And we are looking at ways that we remove obstacles in the way for people in our community to be able to get telehealth services, removing some of the restrictions of the law prior to COVID-19 to make it easier not only for public insurance programs but private insurance programs to provide for telehealth.

By the way, as you know, we have other task forces that are working in regard to children's mental health needs. All of that is important. We need to move forward on extending the resources and access to mental health services so we can identify people in need, give them the services they need, and protect our communities.

But we need to do much more than mental health services in regard to

protecting Americans from gun violence. Let me quote from the Baltimore Sun's editorial this morning. It is titled "Real Insanity Is Doing Nothing About Assault Weapons Again."

The terrible tragedy raises all kinds of questions from the mental health of the killer, the inadequacy of community-based psychiatric care and the bullying by classmates that might have contributed to his instability to the failure of those around him to recognize this potential threat. But one element stands out above so many others: easy access to assault weapons.

This editorial was clearly done, I should have mentioned, with the Texas tragedy that occurred this week.

The United States is an outlier among the nations of the world. We stand alone on the number of guns we have per capita and amount of gun violence. That is not a category that we want to lead the world in, and we do. We have to take action. In 2021 alone, 45,000 Americans lost their life through gun violence. Of that number, over 20,000 were killed as a result of murder or homicide—20,000. Over 300 children lost their lives through gun violence in 2021.

As the Washington Post editorial noted in yesterday's editorial, the elementary school shooting in Texas was "one of at least 24 acts of gun violence of K-12 campuses so far this year in which at least 28 people have been killed . . . [this] came a day after a FBI report showing a sharp increase last year in active-shooter attacks nationwide. In 2020, for the first time, firearms became the leading cause of death for American children and teenagers, supplanting car accidents."

We lost our way. We need to do much more. How many children have to die before we act? When is enough enough? Congress needs to take up and pass commonsense gun safety legislation.

I am going to give a few examples of legislation I hope we can take up and consider. First, the Assault Weapons Ban Act. Ban the sale. We have legislation, S. 736, that bans the sale, manufacture, transfer, and importation of assault weapons, including military-style weapons.

The Baltimore Sun also talked about this. This is the Sunday paper's editorial:

These are not components one needs in self-defense, not the essentials required for target practice [or] local shooting range, not an asset [that] the average deer hunter [needs]. They are, however, the common tools of mass shooters. It's been estimated that about one-quarter of such incidents have involved individuals armed with assault weapons.

The public does not need assault weapons for self-defense. They don't need it for recreational use. They don't need it. These are military-style weapons and should have no place in private ownership. We should take action in order to make our communities safer and our children safer. We should pass the Bipartisan Background Check Expansion Act, which would require checks for all gun sales, including

those from unlicensed sellers. By the way, the House has already passed this action.

And we should pass the Enhanced Background Check Completion Act. That is an act that would eliminate the so-called Charleston loophole that allows for gun sales to go forward if a check is not completed within 3 days, which is an unrealistic requirement that we have.

These are just commonsense gun safety bills that could be passed. We should pass the Keep Americans Safe Act, S. 1108, which would prohibit importation, sale, manufacture, transfer, or possession of magazines that hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition. Why does anyone, for a lawful purpose, need an ammunition magazine that holds more than 10 rounds? The mass killers use it. We shouldn't make it easier for them to carry out these atrocities.

Let me just mention the one option that should not be on the table, and that option is to do nothing. How many children have to die before enough is enough? Doing nothing about the epidemic of guns across this country is killing our children. We must work together to translate our grief into collective action. Enough is enough. Let us act.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO MIKE LIVINGSTON AND GERTRUDE SVARNY

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, it is Thursday, and it is the time of the week that I like to celebrate an amazing person or people in my State who are doing something great for Alaska, great for America, great for the world. It is someone I like to refer to as our Alaskan of the Week—or Alaskans of the Week, plural.

So we are doubling up this week because we have two Alaskans that we are going to be commemorating. And I want to acknowledge it has been a couple of rough weeks for America—we all know that—for reasons that are quite obvious. Some tempers here in the Senate have been flaring a little bit. So I wanted to end the week on what is really an incredible, uplifting story, an epic story. It is a bit complicated, so you have to pay attention if you are wanting to hear about just a remarkable course of events in Alaska.

And it is a particularly poignant story as we head into Memorial Day weekend, a time when we honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. And I am going to tell, as I mentioned, a very special Memorial Day story—a